

Marguerite Maughn Colton

Tape #214

Interviewed by Joe Winder

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Marguerite Colton (Marguerite): I was born in Wellsville, Utah, Cache Valley in 1902 to William H. Maughn, Jr. and Margaret Baxter Maughn. I had a delightful youth, we enjoyed Wellsville, the mountains and the people very, very much. After I graduated from Jr. High School, I enrolled in the Brigham Young College at Logan, Utah. I enjoyed my two years there very much. I don't why, but they always seem to put me president of organizations. I was president of the college class and also on the different groups there.

It was at that time I met Flora Amussen Benson, and we were good girl friends throughout our college career. After college Flora went to Utah State University and I went down to the University of Utah. I enjoyed the University of Utah very much. I worked hard; I tried to keep my scholarship up.

One day, a very dear friend of mine asked me if I was going to a party. I said no, I didn't know anyone and he said, "Now, meet me in the Park Building at the fountain tomorrow. I have a very good friend, just returned home from a mission, and I would like you to meet him" So I put my book under my arm and walked to the fountain the next day; and there I was introduced to Hugh W. Colton. We started going together. I was elected vice-president of the women's organization at the U of U. I was a member of a sorority and was planning on going the next year to the U. of U. But Hugh was graduating, and he wanted to go to Washington, D.C., to George Washington Law School. It was a real good chance for him because his brother, Don B. Colton, was a congressman and he had told Hugh that he would see that he got a job through his office if we he would come back. So we were married and went back to Washington, D.C.

But one little sad thing was, by the time we got there, there had been a rule made and passed on, that congressman were just hiring too many of their family members on their payroll and he wouldn't be able to have a job. Well, Hugh looked around and luckily it was good that he didn't get a job because he became secretary of the Parks and Buildings Committee, which was very good because he could work in the daytime and go to night school. I received a job teaching school so I helped a little bit to put him through law school.

We were there for four years. We went back in 1925 and we came back to Vernal in 1929. That is when our first child was born, Sterling Don Colton, who happens to have just been made a bishop in Washington, D.C., and has been a first vice-president of the Marriott Corp., which his father and Mr. Marriott, a very dear friend, organized in 1926 or seven in Washington, D.C.

Joe Winder (JW): So, Hugh was a partner with Mr. Marriott when they started.....

Marguerite: Yes. In fact, one day it got so hot in Washington, D.C., you just wanted a cool drink of something, all the time, in the summertime. It was almost unbearable. So, Hugh had the idea, himself, and he called Bill. They had been fraternity brothers at the University of Utah and had developed a very good association. In fact, they sold knit goods their first year at the U. of U. up in the northern states. So, he called and said, "Bill, what are you doing?" "Well, I'm kind of busy." Bill's father had had bad luck with his livestock and they were having quite a hard time. Hugh said, "Why don't you come back, I've got an idea."

So, he went back, and by the time he got there Hugh had the corner all picked out and the name, "The Hot Shoppe." Hugh, being an attorney, worked out the plan to sell this root beer. They borrowed, I think, about ten hundred dollars, was all, both. They started the Hot Shoppe. That was about two years they were together in a very close relationship.

So then we came to Vernal and our son, Sterling was born. Bill was very proud of Hugh, that Hugh went into the service as a beginner and came out as a full colonel. We were all very proud of him and Bill wanted him to go back. He said, "You helped me start in Washington, D.C., in my business." He said, "I'll give you all the recipes for everything and I've a good place in Florida that you can start." Bill was just business from the beginning to the end and Hugh wasn't. Hugh was a little bit homesick and he worked hard and we didn't like the large cities.

We would much rather live in a smaller place so we came back. It was interesting. As soon as they heard Hugh was coming, in Vernal, he got a letter from the city people or county, I think it was, saying, "Hugh, we understand that you graduated in law and we haven't an attorney, won't you please come and we will give you the job." By the time we arrived in Vernal, he had a job as County Attorney. So that made it easy.

We have kept that friendship up with the Marriotts. He did so much good with his money. And let me tell you, he didn't make that money alone. His wife, Allie, just helped him so very, very much. Should I mention that he was given a chair at the law school at BYU? Just last winter. At that time Mr. Marriott's son came and he gave such a nice tribute to Hugh, because they knew that Hugh did help start that business. Without his help, maybe there wouldn't have been the Marriott Corp. today. Yes, there would have been, because both Mr. Marriott and Mrs. Marriott and their two sons have been money-making people.

JW: When he came back, he lived in this location?

Marguerite: No. We lived right near Smith's grocery store in town. We lived there and we didn't build our ranch home until Hugh had returned from five years in military service. He organized the National Guard unit here in Vernal and was supposed to just go away each summer for a few weeks training, but it turned into five long years of hard work. We had two wonderful men helping us, Wallace Caldwell, and I just now forgot the other boy's name. One loved the heavy horses and one loved the light horses. They kept it going. Hugh was very anxious to get a home

near the ranch so about a year after he was out of the service we built our ranch home in Maeser. Of course, it is on property of Hugh's father. He enjoyed many years.

We have enjoyed living in Vernal; we are not big city people. We like to go there on a trip and visit our children. Our eldest son, has just been made bishop of a ward in Maryland. Our youngest son works for the State Department in nuclear energy. He travels all over the world. I worry about him, and I say, "Phil, you shouldn't do that." And he says, "Mother, those poor countries have got to have it, but they've got to know how to use it and that is my job." Their relationship is very nice. They don't live very far from each other. Now, Maughn is running the ranch here in Vernal. And, of course, we only had the one sweet daughter and she died several years ago. Her husband and her children come to see us real often so we are happy about that.

JW: When he ended up at Fort Lewis, was he a commander at that time .. National Guard?

Marguerite: Yes. Yes.

JW: Then he was transferred over to Europe?

Marguerite: At first, to California. This might be interesting for the people to know. Hugh worked so hard getting the membership and a unit formed here in Vernal so those who hadn't had the chance to serve their country would have chance, too. He said, "We'll just go for a few weeks each summer and I'll feel that I'm serving my country." Well, it turned out to be five years. But in the meantime, I don't know whether you all will remember or not, but Hugh and the other people that helped organize the National Guard said to the men, "Now, this is great, because you will go in with your friends and be with them all during the service." Well, it didn't work out that way. One group, in some part of the southern states somewhere, was just wiped out. It didn't take long until, when they went from here to California then to Fort Lewis then back again, they took the captains or the people in charge of the units in Utah and put them in charge of the California unit and mixed it up. They just didn't want all the people from one little community to stay together because they might all get wiped out.

JW: I know my friend, Frank Goodrich, was one of those that came out an officer. Joe Calder was about the only one from Vernal that I met up with while I was over in England. I found out he was over there and we arranged to go to Bath, England, to the USO there and I always treasured that.

Marguerite: It was so good to have them find someone. Hugh did. He and his outfit landed on D-Day and they built the roads, if you can imagine my husband being in an engineer outfit to the front lines. But he did work hard. He worked hard and he kept getting a promotion and his final promotion, of course, was by General Eisenhower, on the ground, in the war area, and he became a full colonel. So, the children all felt like it was worthwhile letting him go, if he could work that hard and do that much good.

JW: Well, certainly, that is sure a tribute to any man that would leave voluntarily, you know. I volunteered actually. I had a low draft number, I knew I'd be drafted. I was in the service 42 months and overseas 37 months. I was in Belgium, the Battle of the Bulge when they drove us back and we were up in, right near Buchenwald when the war ended and we went to this prison camp at ?. I was over there at the same time. We were right near each other.

Marguerite: It was a little bit hard, we did take the children as soon as he got to California. He said, "Well, I'm going to be here for quite awhile." Well, we did take the children down and tried it for a year, but with four children, it was really getting hotter. We couldn't get milk, couldn't get butter or eggs and I knew we could get that on the ranch. So I was for coming back and caring for the children.

JW: Marguerite, you have always been active in the community. I can remember this film they made in 1939 of Vernal. It was a movie. Have you seen that? I saw you going into Rosella Calder's Beauty Shop. Tell us a little about how that was made.

Marguerite: Well, it seems to me like when our children started growing up and started going to school I tried to become active in anything that had to do with their best interest. Of course, PTA was the first organization that I left the home for to work. I did work for years in the local PTA then I accepted a position in the State PTA organization. I never would become president, I wanted to do things that my husband and my children were interested in doing. That's why I have held so many offices in the Cowbells, PTA, but I wouldn't take the state offices, only just on committees. I didn't want to be away from home that long.

I was interested in the Legal Ladies Organization, anything that had to do with my husband and my children that I could help with. In fact, my children used to say, "We wish we had more than one mother to give to the PTA." It was a joy. The people in Vernal are so nice to work with.

JW: Now this film was put together by the Lions Club and you were in the Lady Lions, weren't you? Did you have anything to do with film, getting it completed?.

Marguerite: No, I can't. I was interested in a film that we took and put in the library.

JW: Well, it is in the library now, that 1939 film. The Lions Club sponsored it and Claude Banks and others went around and they would sell a certain amount of time on this film to J.C. Penney's, Rosella Calder and the Bakery and Bert Evans. They had a picture of you. Ferron Hacking found that film. It was when they were tearing down the Vogue Theater, I believe, they were hauling some of these old films down to the dump. Ferron happened to be there and he said, "I'm going to take this and see what it is." I guess they had already taken a reel or two down. It is a good interesting picture and very well done. The people on the film, the sequence, you always knew what store you were in. Had J.D. Jones wrapping paper around a package there. Bert Evans was making bread.

Marguerite: I have to smile because it sounds so familiar. But I was asked to be on the State Bi-Centennial Committee. Now that office, I did make trips into Salt Lake City, then they appointed me as chairman of Duchesne, Daggett and Uintah Counties. So I did work. I made those trips in cold weather, warm weather, into our meetings at the state capitol. I tried to get our share of the money to improve the life and the happiness of people in those three counties. It was a little bit hard because everybody was wanting money to build this and to build that. But we have a lovely place over in Roosevelt, lovely place here and a lovely place up in Daggett County. It was a pleasure. I had a little bit of money left over and we made a film of the Uintah Basin and that film was placed down in the library. Whether it is still there or not...You could go and get that film and use it in schools, or they used it mostly for people going through, sightseers wanting to know and it was everything good that we had in our county. I wish that you would just check and see that along with our dolls.

We are so very proud of those dolls. In the beginning we wondered what we could do with this money that we had coming. I remember in Washington, D.C., about going to see these former presidents wives in their inaugural gowns and they were so beautiful. So, that is where we got the idea that we should have those dolls. And my! The community worked hard on that. We had Isobel Batty chairman, and you didn't do anything halfway with her. If that dress didn't look just right, it had to be done over again. It was a joy. This film that I'm talking about was down there so people could hear about other things to see in Uintah Basin.

JW: Was this the Centennial in 1947 that you worked on?

Marguerite: I don't know. [Editor's note: This was in 1976, the country's bi-centennial.] But each county was given a little bit to create the patriotism and all that, you know. I remember when we got it. We had a hard time getting it; it wasn't easy. Every representative in those meetings wanted so much money for their district. The city cooperated so beautifully in deciding where we should have that park. That's why I gave some money. It is called the Marguerite M. Colton Park. There is a little sign up there that they honored me there. Because I did give a lot of money and we had a lot of projects through that, because I wasn't out there and have them give it all away to someone else. We needed it here. [Editor's note: Marguerite is referring to the Colton Pavilion at Vernal City Park near the ballfields.]

JW: That display. I've noticed every time I'm in there there is people coming in and looking. Those girls, I hope they have a record of that committee. They should have because those girls just worked. I remember Paul and Isobel (Batty). I was so proud of the job they were doing. I said, "Let's take a sample in and show it to the committee chairman." I remember he was so efficient, and out of that committee, I imagine there were about fifty of us and we were all trying to get something for our area and so Isobel and Paul—Paul was as proud of those dolls as Isobel was. We took them out in a box and made a display. Oh, those people, you know, because everybody else was saying, we're doing this with our money, or we're doing that. We were really honored. They thought it was wonderful. As I remember, the governor came in to see them, too. He didn't usually meet with us. I think the people were satisfied with the way the money was spent.

MC: Vernal is a beautiful place to live; it really is. I can certainly say there is a lot of wonderful people. I had a lot of ? I don't know why. Because no would take the jobs, I guess. It has been a pleasure, I couldn't have done it alone. You have to have that help and it has been a joy.

JW: We have down here the Marguerite Colton Pavilion. Could you tell us a little about your interest in that?

MC: Well, you see, each county was allowed a certain amount of money to improve their community. It was Bi-centennial celebration. They just wanted the state to be celebrating all over. So we had to take to them—the committee—our suggestion. Now I got - everywhere, Roosevelt, Myton everywhere, I got a little bit for something, you know. And the people, our committee. I had a very, very, good committee. I think on the committee that helped me make those decisions, I had school represented, church represented, community, civic organizations represented. I imagine there were about twenty and we met regularly and they helped to decided where that money—if I could get it from the state—where it would go.

I remember they didn't have that place to play ball and those things. All they had was that little tiny area down by the library. The children needed it. That is why. I really didn't... But I do want to paint it one of these days. It needs some new paint around the top, but it has been a lifesaver.

JW: I believe it was last 24 of July, or in '87, they presented you with an award as an outstanding citizen, right there when they dedicated that pavilion. They did that because you have been a leader in our community for so many years and spurred these people to help.

MC: Well, anyone could do it. I felt that I didn't mind doing public service as long as it was helping our children, or helping our husbands. I like to help the church and community, too; it all fits in. But it has been a joy and I don't regret any of the time I have spent.

JW: As you look back, are there any other special occasions when you've had your family together and what did you do and where did you go when you had them come to a reunion?

MC: They all loved to come here. Quite a few years ago my husband made an exchange for a piece of property up on the mountain, the Old Dyer Mine Smelter. We haven't gotten a road into there, you have to go horseback or else walk, but the campers all go through and we leave the door open and a broom by it.

Last year someone didn't do what the little paper said. We said, "We don't mind you staying here overnight, but be sure and shut the door." The door was left open and what is it that crawls around on the ground? Beaver! The beavers are in that area and someone had left the door open and it had gotten up and eaten the corner of the table that was pulled down. I said our children came down, you should have seen the notice they put up and tore the other one down.

They loved to go there, although they are getting pretty far away. We have one granddaughter that is an engineer, that has been working for gold in Africa for a years. Another granddaughter... they are very busy people. They love to come home, and we are very proud of what they are doing.

JW: One of your brothers came here for a few years, didn't he? He was a bishop in the Maeser Ward, I believe, then moved back up to Cache Valley. Was that your brother?

MC: No, I remember that. No, he wasn't of our family; he was a relative. Now, like I say, my Grandfather Maughn had six wives and forty children. He was loved by everybody in Cache Valley. Brigham Young sent him to Cache Valley to settle Wellsville. He was so wonderful with the Indians. Everyone would say if [they had] trouble, get Bishop Maughn to go and take care of them. At his death, I remember them telling us that there was a mile and a half of Indians on horseback in that parade going to his funeral service. He was William H. Maughn Sr. and my father was William H. Maughn Jr. Sometimes they would get them mixed.

JW: Didn't they recently renovate the Wellsville tabernacle?

MC: Yes. They had a hard time. It's a beautiful tabernacle. We've always contributed. Our home was a big home and it was right across the street from the square and the tabernacle.

JW: This tabernacle we have here, the church still owns it, but they don't keep it up. It worries it me that it's going to deteriorate. It's a beautiful building and it's the largest auditorium between Craig and Salt Lake City. I used to be stake clerk and at times we would have the ushers count the people. I remember one time David O. McKay was out and we had 1594 in attendance that day. It is a big auditorium. I just wished the community... I would rather see it stay with the church because it has been dedicated to the Lord, but they don't seem to want to fix it up like they did in Wellsville and up in Idaho where President Benson... Getting the Church to move on it in some way or another, so we might be calling on you to head a committee.

Marguerite: I'm afraid my committee work is done. I know Hugh is willing to donate to have it. Alta Winward has talked to him about it. He would love to have it kept, too. The Daughters of Pioneers, is their little office still across the street? Do they still have that there? I know we got some money for them. It wasn't very much, but we got a little bit. It's open.

JW: It may be open every day now. They don't try to heat it in the winter time. It is such a big area there. The tourists think that is one of the most interesting places they have ever seen. It portrays the pioneers, doesn't it? Like making straw hats like Mrs. Hunting did, making bread, making ice cream, making butter.

Marguerite: I have never joined. I think I would have done if I had made my home in Cache Valley. My ancestors certainly belonged to it and made those trips. We were early pioneers and I'm sure they did the best they could.

I remember a story they tell about my Grandfather. See, his father sent one son here, one here and there, he had quite a few of them. They first built a little dug-out in the side of the hill and the Indians would come and my grandfather would go by skis all the way from Wellsville. Have you been up from Brigham City to Wellsville? Yes. Alright, he had to go up over that mountain and down to get sugar and those things, you know. Grandmother was left alone, I guess it was my father in her arms, and this old Indian pushed the drapery back and said, "Sick baby?" She said, "Yes, yes." That Indian stood watch until my grandfather got back from Brigham City. He wasn't going to let a mean Indian in. There were two kinds of Indians. There were the good kind and the bad kind, just like everything else in life.